पिछले 5-6 महीने से शायद सरकार जो कड़ी कार्यवाही इरेग्यूलरिटीज के खिलाफ कर रही है उसी के कारण हो सकता है कि कुछ अफसर एस०टी०सी० से भाग जाना चाहते हों । आपने हमको यह नहीं बताया कि 9 अफसर जिन्होंने इस्तीफे दिये हैं। Had you ever examined their credentials before accepting their resignations ? क्योंकि हो सकता है कि शायद आप कुछ कार्यवाही करते रहे होंगे और उनका अगर उनको पता लग गया हो तो भाग जाने के लिए खुद ही उन्होंने इस्तीफे दे दिये हों। इसमें एक और आदमी का नाम पूछना चाहता हूं जो एस०टी०सी० के वनआफ दा जनरल मैनेजर थे मिस्टर एच०के० सोनी इन्होंने भी इस्तीफा दे दिया है तो क्या सरकार के कहने से इस्तीफा दे दिया है ? इसका मतलब है कि सरकार ने उनको बताया होगा या कहा होगा कि आपको इस्तीफा देना जरूरी है नहीं तो कार्यवाही हो जायगी। तो इन्होंने क्या आपके कहने से इस्तीफा दे दिया है या नही और 9 अफसर जिन्होंने इस्तीफे दिये है आपने उनके क्रेडेशियल्स इक्जामिन किये हैं या नहीं किये हैं अगर किये हैं तो इनके बारे में आपकी क्या राय है ?

श्री अर्जुन सिंह : मान्यवर, इन लोगों ने जो इस्तीफे दिये हैं इन इस्तीफों मे जो कारण दिये गये है वे तो मैंने आपको बताये हैं कि यह बात जरूर है कि इनके पीछे जाकर देखना जरूरी है कि इनके इस्तीफे साधारण तौर से आये हैं या किन्ही घटनाओं की परिस्थिति मे इन्होंने इस्तीफे दिये हैं । मैं माननीय सदस्य से निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि इस संबंध में वे थोड़ा समय दें मैं निश्चित रूप से आपकी मंशा के मुताबिक . . . (**व्यवधान**) कार्यवाही करूंगा ।

डा० बापू कालदाते : ये सारे मामले आये है, निकल रहे है कि एस० टी० सी० में काफी अनियमितताएं हो रही हैं । क्या अब इरेग्यूलरिटीज के बारे में सरकार कुछ कडी जांच कर रही है ? क्या मान्यवर यह बताएंगे कि इन इरेग्यूलरिटीज के बारे में [illegible] कुछ कदम उठाये हैं, अगर उठाए हैं तो क्या उठाए हैं और आज तक जो भी कदम उठाये हैं उनसे क्या सरकार को कुछ पता लगा है कि इससे कई करोड़ों की अनियमितताएं हो गयी हैं ?

श्री अर्जुन सिंह : इसके लिए पूर्व सूचना की आवश्यकता होगी ।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

DR. BAPU KALDATE: Sir, it is a part of the questiton. Please see part (c) of the question. That is what I had asked.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is a new Minister. Indulgence is given to him. Next question.

Investment Allowance claimed by M/s. Delhi Bottling Company (P) LTD.

*27. SHRI KALPNATH RAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that M/s. Delhi Bottling Company Private Limited claimed investment allowance under the Income tax Act during the year ending 31st December, 1982 for acquiring bottles/cases, treating it as plant and machinery;

(b) if so, how such allowance was allowed to the company; and

(c) what action Government propose to take for this illegal claim?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No supplementary? Next question.

Losses suffered by Manganese Ore (India) Limited

*28. SHRI S. W. DHABE:

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Manganese Ore (India) Limited has been incurring losses during the last three years;

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri S. W. Dhabe.

(b) if so, what is the annual loss incurred during the above period, year wise;

(c) what steps are being taken to improve the profitability of the undertaking and whether there is any proposal to set up Ferro Manganese plant etc. so as to use the Manganese profitably; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI K. C. PANT): (a) and (b) The Manganese Ore (India) Limited has incurred a loss of Rs. 27.31 lakhs in 1983-84 and Rs. 216.83 lakhs in 1984-85.

(c) and (d) The production of ores, which are not readily saleable has been stopped and emphasis is being laid on the production of ferro grade ores and better grades with manganese content higher than 46 per cent instead of blast furnace grade ores.

Operations have been closed in two uneconomical mines and a critical study of operations and implementation of cost control and reduction measures have been undertaken. Norms of consumption for different operations in different mines have been fixed and they are being monitored.

The price of ferro grade ore which is used for the production of ferro manganese has been increased by Rs. 75|- per tonne to provide for increased costs due to wage revision and recategorisation of workers from unskilled so semi-skilled which came into force from 19th October, 1983, and the rise in power cost etc.

Efforts are also being made to reduce the elements of labour costs in the total cost of production.

The company has a proposal to set up a plant for the production of Electrolytic Manganese Dioxide (EMD), which is used in the manufacture of dry cell batteries for which an investment decision is still to be taken.

Manganese Ore (India) Limited earlier had plans to set up a Ferro Manganese complex. The proposal has been dropped in view of lack of adequate demand.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Sir, this is one company in which the Government is not taking any interest though it is a very important ore and a large number of rural people are employed from the Vidarbha area of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in the Manganese Ore (India) Limited. In 1983-84 it had incurred a loss of Rs. 27.3 lakhs and in 1984-85 the loss has gone up to Rs. 2.16 crores. So, there is something wrong in the management of this company. This is one company where the wages paid are lower by seven to ten rupees than the wages paid in the coal, steel and mines industries. A proposal for a project was made five years back and it is still not taken up. One of them which has been mentioned is about dry cell batteries and manganese process industries based on manganese. May I know from the Minister why such a long delay has occurred for starting an undertaking to manufacture dry cell batteries—an investment decision is still to be taken and the proposal is till pending—and why the Government is not taking steps to have an ancillary industry or connected industry so that this undertaking becomes profitable?

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir, my hon. friend is correct in saying that this company was making a profit and is now making a loss. Hopefully, the loss will be less this year than last year. But the real reason for this is that demand for manganese has fallen off in Indian industry, particularly, the ferro-manganese industry. On the other hand, the various costs have gone up—costs of inputs—and stocks have risen to one year's production because of the fall-off in demand and off-take, and prices, naturally, can't rise. Export has to be taken resort to and export price is low. All these factors have contributed to the losses of this company. So far as the particular project, the Electrolytic Manganese Dioxide project, to which my hon. friend has referred to is concerned, Rs. 8 crores have been allocated for that project in the Seventh Plan and we shall try to expedite further scrutiny of that project. It has not yet been approved by the

PIB and we will try to take it up with the PIB as early as possible.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Sir, manganese ore is used by the steel industry to a very large extent and as far as my knowledge goes, it is taken from outside. The reason given in the reply is rather surprising—that efforts are being made to reduce the element of labour costs. This is one industry where the wages are the lowest in the whole of Indian industry. Coal, mica and steel I have already mentioned. May I know, therefore, from the hon. Minister whether a proposal can be made that the Steel Authority of India will treat Manganese Ore (India) Limited as a subsidiary so that the problem is integrated and their ore is used by the Steel Authority of India and manganese for their steel mills is not taken from outside?

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir, I can't speak for all the plants but Bhilai, I have found, takes almost all its manganese from this company. If it can help the company, we can discuss this with SAIL but I don't think that is the problem. The problem lies in the ferro-manganese production area. That is why the off-take has fallen steeply and that is why in MOIL, which is a major producer, the problem has to be tackled. There are three grades of manganese: One is for blast furnaces, the other is ferro-manganese and the third is superior quality of manganese required for dry cells and so on. So, one must identify the project area, and that is the difficult area, the problem area which I have mentioned. About the element of labour costs, wages can be low but the element of labour costs—cumulative—can till be high in the cost of production, and it is a matter of easy comparison. Therefore, the fact is that the element of labour cost is high in the case of production and mining of manganese ore in this company. How to reduce it is a different matter and I will need the cooperation of friends like Mr. Dhabe for that.

SHRI K. C. PANT: No, Sir. But, there is recession in the ferro-alloys industry, adversely affecting the profitability of the Manganese Ore India Ltd. But this one company which has the choicest mining leases of manganese, over which India once upon a time had control in the entire world so far as the manganese is concerned. It still continues to enjoy those leases. My query to the hon Minister would be this.

One of the problems which resulted in adversely affecting the profitability and endemic malaise, Sir, was the pilferage and theft. And one of them was resistance by the officials of the company to make the security more stringent. May I know if he has any idea on this aspect of the matter?

SHRI K. C. PANT: No, Sir. But certainly since he is the ex-Minister of the Department, I take the suggestion very seriously.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister says that we want to reduce the cost of labour. The labour cost can be reduced by two factors—by increasing the efficiency and increasing the production by employing new technology or by retrenchment of labour. Will the Government see that the efficiency is increased and that new technology is developed so that the same labour force can be retained and that the cost of production can be brought down? Will the Government look into this and see that, instead of retrenchment, new technology is employed and the efficiency is increased?

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir I never used the word "retrenchment", and I do not use it now. What I did say in reply to Dhabeji was that the element of the labour cost was high. I did not use the word "retrenchment" at all.

The problem with my hon. friend's suggestion is that if we increase the production of the manganese ore, the stocks will increase, but the sale will not increase. Therefore, the profitability cannot increase. Mere increase of efficiency without sale of the product does not help the companies.